

ZABALAZA NEWS

★★★ for freedom from authority and capitalism ★★★

In Solidarity with Cosatu and the Workers of the World- ZACF Statement on Zimbabwe, Xenophobia and Food Prices

The Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front (ZACF) recognises that the crisis in Zimbabwe, ongoing xenophobic attacks and rising food prices are of great importance to the working class, both in South Africa and internationally. Resolving these crises in favour of the poor and working poor will require mass direct action and solidarity.

We stand by the right of Zimbabwean people to be free from violent repression, intimidation, arbitrary arrests, torture and murder by state forces and others allied to the despotic Mugabe regime.

We support the right of all people to be free from hunger, malnutrition and easily preventable sickness caused lack of healthy food.

We support people's right to freedom of movement under any circumstances, especially when seeking a better future for themselves and their families when the political and economic conditions in their places of origin to do not allow for their wellbeing.

We support the right of people to satisfy their basic needs, such as electricity, housing and other basic services.

In line with this, we support the demands made by Cosatu for actions to be taken to protect the poorest layers of society from the effects of rising food prices, by raising social grants and minimum wages. We support the demand for

basic foods to be VAT zero-rated, for land reform to be accelerated, for more land to be made available for food production.

We agree with Cosatu that poor and working class South

immigrants living in poor communities in South Africa.

We call on all the organisations of the working class to make a sincere effort to involve immigrants in their struggles and, similarly, to support the day to day struggles of these immigrants in all their forms.

Alexandra, a hotbed of working class resistance to oppression for decades, has been racked and divided by xenophobic riots. Some among the South African working class are turning their anger against immigrants instead of the true enemy, the capitalists. This is a tragedy, not only for our immigrant brothers and sisters, but for the South African working class. A working class divided will win nothing but more oppression and exploitation. A working class united will never be defeated.

In Alexandra, the workers and the poor, both South African and immigrant, faces a crisis of housing. A battle between South Africans and immigrants over who gets the houses will only

prolong the crisis. To win housing, water and electricity, the class must unite.

Working class organisations in Alexandra and elsewhere are fighting for housing and services. Immigrants and South Africans should join in these struggles. We call on the militant organisations of the South African working class to bring immigrants into their movements, to



Africans and immigrants have a common interest in struggling together to improve their living conditions.

Our aim is for this common interest to grow into a common struggle to improve conditions and to resist all forms of oppression.

We call on working class and poor South Africans to build alliances and structures of support with

establish joint committees, to learn together the nature of the common oppression binding all workers, and to build and grow common struggles against this oppression.

In the face of hate-filled, mindless xenophobic attacks, immigrants have sought the protection of the police. We understand and respect this move. When our lives are threatened, we go where we can.

But the police are no friends of immigrants. Again and again they have shown their xenophobia. This is the force of repression that randomly picks people up off the street because their skins are darker than the average in South Africa, checking for ID books and papers as they checked for passes under the old regime. This is the force of repression that intimidates workers into passing over their hard-earned wages in bribes if they cannot prove they have the right to be in this country. This is the force of repression that throws workers into the squalor of the Lindela concentration camp for months of imprisonment until they are deported to their countries of origin, to poverty, to starvation, and in some of these countries – including Zimbabwe – to repression, torture and murder.

The police may show mercy today. But immigrants who seek police protection today may be arrested tomorrow – or next week, or in two months – by the very same police who offered to protect them today.

Today they may have no option. Xenophobic terror is terrible indeed. When Zimbabwean immigrants go so far as to ask to be repatriated to the country they fled, a country now plunging deeper than ever into economic ruin and tyrannical repression, they show the true terror of xenophobia – terror

that, in the end, hits all the workers and all the poor.

In the face of such terror, we should do better than relying on our enemies. The robber capitalists and their armed wing, the state and its police, are our enemies. The friends of the workers are the workers. The friends of the immigrant workers should be the South African workers. We call on all workers and poor people to unite in daily struggle. And, while xenophobic attacks may continue, we hope the time will come when South African and immigrant workers will join in defence against these attacks.

The dockworkers of Durban, members of the South African Transport and Allied Workers' Union, members of Cosatu, have shown the way. Less than two months ago, the Mugabe regime sought to import a shipment of weapons from China to slaughter those who resisted tyranny. This shipload was to be unloaded in Durban, and carried by truck through South Africa to the butcher of Harare.

The dockworkers of Durban declared that they would not unload this shipment. They were joined by transport workers throughout the world.

More weapons may follow. All workers in South Africa, whether South African, Zimbabwean, whatever may be their nationality, should be prepared to stop these weapons, to defend the workers and the poor of Zimbabwe against the tyrant.

Workers and poor people can unite in the struggle for housing, for water, for electricity, against repression, against dictators.

And workers and poor people can unite in the struggle for food.

The insane increase in food prices is a global crisis, and is meeting with global resistance. Throughout the world, workers,

peasants and the poor face starvation as World Bank structural adjustment programmes, trade agreements prepared by and for the capitalists, oil profiteering, biofuel programmes that seek to evade the energy crisis by burning food, and price fixing so plainly criminal that even the South African state has felt obliged to fine food company Tiger Brands nearly R100 million (a mere 4.5 percent of these robbers' 2007 profit of R2.24 billion, bringing no relief in the price of bread), are united in a single onslaught of plunder and starvation.

But the people are fighting back. Workers and the poor have rioted from Egypt to Mozambique, from Haiti to the Philippines. In Haiti and in Cameroon, these actions have forced the state to cap food prices.

The ZACF supports Cosatu's demands to defend workers and the poor against food inflation. And we go further. We declare that by taking to the streets, the working class can win a price cap on all basic food.

In struggle the workers can unite. In struggle the workers of the world can defeat the capitalist plunderers who would starve us all to death if they could make a profit from it. In struggle the workers can reach beyond small differences of nationality, can topple the tyrant Mugabe as we toppled the tyrants of the apartheid regime, can build a world where neither boundary fence, nor plundering mielie merchant, nor policeman of hatred, will deprive us of our needs and hold us in terror.

The ZACF calls on Cosatu, on the community social movements, on all the organisations of the working class, across all borders, to join in direct action against every oppressor.

Against Chauvinism, Against Nationalism!

As the media, the politicians and the "experts" rack their brains in search of the cause of the "criminality" and "xenophobia" that has killed 62 people in 2 weeks and driven 45 000 from their homes, organisations of the working class have come closer

to the truth than any of these wise men and women.

Abahlali baseMjondolo tell how "the anger of the poor can go in many directions". They tell how fury is stirred up by "the rats and the fires and the lack of toilets", by unemployment, homelessness and

mandrax. They tell how people are "damaged" in a world where few are rich and many are poor.

The demon that has been unleashed in Gauteng, that is spreading to Mpumalanga and other provinces, is the demon of poverty. It is the child of the demon of

capitalism, of the demon of exploitation.

But another demon has also been unleashed. This is the demon of NATIONALISM.

Abahlali point out that all the poor, all the workers, face "the same kind of oppression". They call on all the poor and the workers to join in struggle against this oppression. The Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front joins this call.

But against this unity of the working class appears another unity, a false unity, the unity of nationalism. This is a false unity between the rich and the poor, between the oppressor and the oppressed. It is a false unity that divides those who should be united. It proclaims that because the master and the slave were born in the same country, they have something in common, from which the slaves of other countries must be excluded.

The ZACF does not deny or reject bonds of language, culture and tradition. But in the greatest of struggles, the struggle against poverty, exploitation and oppression, we proclaim that class unity, the unity of all the oppressed and exploited, must come first.

When Winnie Madikizela-Mandela declares that those who attack foreigners are not real "South Africans", she calls up the demon of nationalism. She says that to be South African is good, and not to be South African is bad. She presents herself as a leader who can decide who are the real South Africans. And like so many politicians, she would surely say we should be "proudly South African" - as if where you are born is the most important thing to be proud of.

These are the divisions that keep us in slavery, that stop us uniting against our true enemies. Our true enemies – the real criminals – are the capitalists and the state, the robbers who exploit us and the politicians who lie to us. Always these partners stand together against us, and seek to stop us standing together against them. They so fill our heads with lies that some of us even think the insane rise in food prices is somehow the work of foreigners – when clearly it is the work of the small band of capitalists of all countries who control the world's food.

Poverty and oppression can never be resolved through capitalism or the state.

The ZACF agrees with the greatest part of Abahlali's analysis and supports the bulk of their demands. But we have one difference. We cannot join in their call for "a police force that serves the people". No police force can be anything other than a force of repression, a force for the state to keep itself on top and the masses at the bottom, a force for the defence of the rich against the poor. Again and again the police have shown this against the movements of the poor, arresting, torturing and murdering us. Not to mention their attacks on immigrants. When the politicians condemn poor South Africans for attacking foreigners, it is because they wish to preserve this power of violence for themselves and their forces alone.

We can and do fight to stop the worst police repression. And any of us, in fear of our lives, will seek the help of the police when there is no alternative. We cannot blame anyone

for seeking refuge with the police, or for calling them in to prevent imminent attacks.

But we hope for something better. If there is no alternative, let us try to create one. Let us build our movements to the point where immigrants – or women facing rape, or gay and lesbian people facing chauvinistic violence – do not need to seek the dubious help of the police. Let us build strong, organised working class communities that can defend themselves and their comrades against repression and chauvinism.

And let us build our movements to the point where they can fight oppression in every form, everywhere. The dockworkers of Durban recently prevented a shipment of weapons from passing through South Africa to the Mugabe regime – but the weapons reached the butcher of Harare by another route. With a stronger movement, an international movement of the working class, we could halt all future shipments. We could cease quarreling over the supposed ideals of tyrants and topple tyranny. We could cease fighting over who should get a house, and demand and obtain houses for all. We could cease blaming our brothers and sisters for "taking jobs", and demand and get jobs for all. We could cease seeking scapegoats for soaring food prices, and force a halt in the rise in prices as a step towards food for all. We could win ID books for all – or better still, a world in which none will need ID books. We could tear down the Lindela concentration camp. And building a global movement that reaches across every border, we could proclaim to the whole world:

NO BORDERS! NO NATIONS! NO DEPORTATIONS!

**Don't fight your neighbours for their houses -
Fight the government for houses for all!**

Over 5000 people from South Africa and Zimbabwe to the Congo and Ethiopia marched through Johannesburg on Saturday, 24th May in protest against xenophobic violence, which ravaged South Africa during the previous two weeks leaving more than 60 dead and an estimated 45 000 immigrants

displaced from their homes. The march, which proceeded through some of the areas in downtown Johannesburg effected by the violence, was organised by the Coalition Against Xenophobia; a new umbrella group of social movements, faith-based organisations and NGOs.

Protesters called for Africa to unite, saying that the struggle against poverty and exploitation knows no borders, and received a large amount of support from spectators and passers-by - which is partly to be expected given the high numbers of immigrants living in the areas through which the march

passed, but which also suggests that a lot of ordinary South Africans do not support the xenophobic violence.

Members of the Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front participated in the march, distributing 1000 leaflets on the xenophobic violence; which we believe is a result of both the bourgeois nationalism promoted by the ruling ANC and its failure to fulfill promises of 'a better life for all'. We supported the march because we thought it was important to send a message of solidarity to immigrants living in South Africa, and to show them that they are not alone, but also to show those responsible for the violence that many people do not accept that foreigners are responsible for the lack of service delivery, for poverty, for the high levels of crime or for the increase in food prices. Most importantly to assert a sense of African working class solidarity.

We, like the Coalition Against Xenophobia, believe that the outbreak of xenophobic violence is a result of the poverty in which the majority of South Africans are forced to live. We believe that it is not immigrants who are responsible for the miserable conditions people are forced to endure, but the government. Since coming into power in 1994 the ANC government has pursued economic and social policies which favour the rich over the poor; pitting the poor against one another in a fight for insufficient resources when it is actually the

government that is to blame for failing to fulfill its promises, and failing to deliver the housing, electricity, water and other basic services which it promised us.

As anarchist communists we believe that, rather than fighting poor people from other countries, the workers and poor from South Africa must unite with immigrants in their communities to put pressure on the government and force it to fulfill its promises and provide adequate service delivery for all, both South Africans and foreigners. It is not immigrants who are stealing jobs and houses, it is the government which is not creating enough jobs, and not providing adequate housing in the first place - while ANC fat cats are enriching themselves. We need to fight the government and force it to meet our demands for jobs, housing and services; not our immigrant brothers and sisters who are also struggling to survive poverty and unemployment.

Although the ZACF supported the march against xenophobia, we do not believe that protesting the violence after it has happened is sufficient. We believe that it is necessary to build a mass working class movement which is capable of defending immigrants from violent mobs which do not recognise that it is the government and the capitalist system - which makes the rich richer, and the poor poorer - which are to blame for their suffering; not the immigrants. We need a movement

which can establish working class community-based safe havens for immigrants, where they can go if they are attacked and where they know that they will be defended by those communities. A movement which can intervene and prevent further violence being committed against our working class and poor brothers and sisters just because they are from another country.

We need a mass working class movement that can challenge government and force it to concede to our demands for housing, jobs and service delivery. Social movements such as the Anti-Privatisation Forum and Landless People's Movement have been trying to build such a movement for years, but the xenophobic attacks indicate that they have not yet achieved a mass base, which could have prevented this outbreak of violence from happening.

The ZACF is committed to working within and supporting movements such as the APF and LPM in an effort to build a mass-based movement of the workers and poor capable of both defending themselves and their communities from attacks; both internally, from reactionary community members, and externally, in the form of state repression and economic domination; as well as advancing the struggle of the workers and poor for proper housing, jobs and service delivery for all - regardless of their country of origin.

FOR COMMUNITY AND WORKPLACE CONTROL BY WORKERS AND THE POOR!



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